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Title:

Opening address at the International Symposium of Theatre Design

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Mr. Baily, Ladies and Gentlemen :

To those of you who are visitors to South Australia, Welcome. I understand that en-route here, as a result of the airlines dispute, some of you have seen unexpected aspects and regions of this country. I hope that the inconvenience was off-set by that diversion.

When Anthony Steel first invited me to open this Symposium, I was very pleased to accept, because I believe it is appropriate that an international symposium on theatre design be held in Australia now, and in this city in particular.

The arts in Australia are currently enjoying an unprecedented level of Government support, and this is especially the case in the area of theatre construction. The Sydney Opera House is the most well-known (some may say most notorious) outcome of this situation; the Adelaide Festival Centre is, according to some authorities, its most professionally effective result. Another major performing arts complex is currently under construction in Melbourne. Planning for yet others is advancing in a number of State regional areas.

But in the case of the Adelaide Centre, and in relation to the general subject of your deliberations this week, that is, 'Building Theatres for Communities', I think that it is worthwhile pointing out that this was built for the community, following consultation with a very wide range of people in the community, to fulfil social needs clearly apparent in the community.

And basically, this is how it happened. Adelaide's traditionally lively interest and involvement in the arts saw the development of a Festival of Arts in the late fifties, and the creation of the South Australian Theatre Company in the mid-sixties. These two organisations tended to act as catalysts: their existence, in particular, served to define two closely related but nevertheless distinct problems. On the one hand, the Festival of Arts rapidly became a kind of two-yearly cultural smorgasbord, and while not all of the delicacies laid before us in it were always fresh, they were, by and large, filling. And this was the problem. For we then tended to be peckish for another two years.

In short, it was clear generally in the community that, in addition to the Festival, a series of modest and regular cultural repasts was desirable.

On the other hand, there was the case of the South Australian Theatre Company. Originally the creation of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, it then became an incorporated body and remained so until established as a Statutory Company by the State Government some two years ago. During its formative years, the Company played in most of Adelaide's theatres - Theatre 62, The Scott Theatre, The Sheridan Theatre, The Arts Theatre, The Union Hall, and so on. And it was clear from its nomadic situation then that, if it was to develop as the State's major performing arts company, it needed a home of its own.

As I said, these two organisations acted as catalysts. But they were catalysts operating in a wide and diverse cultural context: the prestige of the city and the State had rapidly become involved with the Festival's success: the problems of the South Australian Theatre Company were quickly noted and defined by the large body of people in the community then involved in its long-standing and remarkably proficient amateur theatre movement; there was a healthy music and concert life in the city which argued for a major venue. In other words, there was a definable demand for major performing arts facilities in Adelaide.

However, despite all this opinion and activity, the first plan to be produced was for a major concert hall only. Presumably because, somehow, music then seemed more respectable than the theatre arts. It was an uninspiring building, looking a bit like a covered waggon. Its site was to be on Montefiore Hill where, at that time, there were a number of beautiful old Adelaide stone cottages and an attractive late 19th century gothic revival mansion owned by a branch of the Bonython family, and called Carclew.

Now if there was anything really notable about this first plan for a major concert hall, it was its similarity with the Sydney Opera House. Not, mind you, in its design which was nondescript; but in that the design and the site were determined prior to a proper assessment being made of what was to go on in the place. Accordingly, professional performing arts planners

and administrators were not really very surprised when the Montefiore Hill site was dropped owing to the fact that it was not big enough, did not allow easy access to transport and parking, and was only several hundred feet beneath Adelaide Airport's main landing flight path. Unfortunately, the little cottages did not survive the bulldozers which had been called in very early in the project's history. Carclew, however, does, now as an arts centre for young people with, one trusts, a splendid future. The foundation of this centre has been laid this year: 1975 will see the first full years operation of an integrated community arts centre for young people.

It was late in 1967 that out of the previous Montefiore Hill situation came the first move which resulted in The Adelaide Festival Centre being built. I am proud to say I was central to the matter in that, as Premier then, I asked Mr. Thomas DeGaetani of New York (who was then consultant to the Lincoln Centre) to come to Adelaide and make a proper assessment of our needs here.

He recommended what, in effect, this centre contains today: a major venue capable of being effectively used both as a lyric theatre and a concert hall; a drama theatre capable of handling both proscenium and thrust stage productions; and this experimental and highly flexible 'Space' in which your Theatre Design Symposium is being held this week. His recommended site was some three hundred yards from here, across King William Road. This present site (chosen by another Premier during a short and unusual interregnum) was originally designed for the main theatre only. My Government four years ago decided to add the other facilities DeGaetani recommended and in doing so we found that the natural slope of the site gave us a bonus in the way of The Amphitheatre.

Stage Three, the completion of the plaza, is now about to take shape. When it is complete, I believe we will have in Adelaide a performing arts centre equal with the best anywhere. In Europe in this year and others, I have seen some of the competition: we have nothing here in any way to be apologetic about.

Now I don't intend in all of this to indulge, on behalf of the State, in endless self congratulations. I merely mention one experience here and give a general account of the motivation leading up to the centre's construction. The point is that it was a properly planned project from the outset: other speakers at this symposium

will cover the details of how, once the decisions in principle were made, the detailed planning proceeded.

And so, the deliberations of this seminar are quite pertinent to our development in this State. For I do not see the Adelaide Festival Centre as an isolated thing: It is part of a programme of cultural development which relates centrally to our total programme of social development.

And this is basically what I want to talk about today, because in this programme are policies and projects that deeply involve the design of theatres and similar structures.

Let me first explain our basic motivation, but without going into a lengthy examination of cultural absolutes.

Since the latter part of the 19th century all Governments in Australia have funded art galleries, libraries, museums, certain learned societies and the like. The original motivation was depressingly Victorian: Art Galleries and museums were seen mainly as socially and morally uplifting places to which one repaired to marvel at, say, the glories of pagan Greece as exemplified by a plaster reproduction of the Apollo Belvedere, or (with museums) to observe the handiwork of the Lord as exemplified by bones, stones and stuffed beasts.

Inevitably, and thankfully, the functions of such institutions have evolved. In the case of the major state libraries, art galleries and museums, they are now important cultural institutions and play a prominent role in the day to day life of their cities. And in relation to this, in South Australia, we see no substantive difference between the Government funding of, say, an art gallery or a library, and its funding of a theatre company or a performing arts complex. In a sense the Government in this context performs the tasks grand patrons of art have throughout civilised history in both the east and the west.

But the patronage should be seen in relation to the total shape of contemporary Government activity and responsibility: the massive Governmental patronage of all levels of education and research, of health, hospitals and welfare: and of economic, industrial and environmental planning. Compared with the funds used in those areas, Australia's total arts funding by Government is miniscule. It is so even when compared with one State's expenditure on hospitals and education.

Nevertheless, the amount of money directed by the Australian Governments to general cultural purposes has in the past four years increased immensely. For instance, in South Australia, direct grants to the arts have risen from \$284,000 in 1971-72 to \$1.4 million in this current financial year. And those figures do not include capital works such as a substantial part of this \$17 million centre, the funding of our art gallery, and many other important areas of arts development including those proceeding from our colleges of advanced education.

Further, in addition to the State's areas of primary performing arts funding (which include the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust, the Adelaide Festival of Arts, the South Australian Theatre Company, the Arts Council of South Australia, New Opera, and the Australian Dance Theatre) there are also related cultural bodies, such as the South Australian Film Corporation, and the South Australian Crafts Authority. These make the total money vote involved very great indeed.

In fact, I should mention here that as an example of the interlocking nature of these bodies: the foyer at the front of this theatre, on the plaza level, will shortly be used as a permanent gallery-shop for crafts.

Now in all this I think the first point I should make is that there are inevitably dangers in such heavy Governmental funding of the arts, especially at the moment when, in this country in particular, the programmes are so new.

This is because, the organisations receiving grants often become so dependent on Government support that they render themselves easily subject to control by the Government or its officers. Additionally, organisations seeking funds often feel they should tailor their output to what they think a Government wants, and thus involve themselves in a kind of self-censorship. One can easily continue with such examples. But even though there are very real problems associated with Governmental arts funding, they are not insurmountable. I do not believe independent research and enquiry in Universities has been fundamentally affected by contemporary and necessary dependence on Government funds. Indeed, when Governments or Government agencies do give tied grants in controversial political - academic areas they are more often than

not the subject of considerable public criticism for doing so. The example is, I believe, a vital one. Universities, though dependent on Governmental finance, maintain a very strong tradition of independence.

Unfortunately, in the area of arts funding in Australia there is no such established tradition of independence. Specifically, Australian public servants are rarely learned or experienced in cultural matters. Too often they apply a nit-picking cost-accountancy approach, with all its concomitant implications of market place profit-seeking. Nothing, in my experience, infuriates the creative person more than this nonsense, especially when the public administrator is ignorant of what it is he is administering. All Governmental bureaucrats in Australia must be told again and again that the profits of arts funding and administration are not of a kind to be written up in conventional ledgers. No one suggests High Schools or Universities should behave like car yards: neither should the performing arts. On the political level, of course, official tampering can range from demands that the cultural body perform programmes that are someone's idiosyncratic idea of 'popular', through to political, social or moral censorship.

It is for these reasons that early this year I established the Arts Grants Advisory Committee of South Australia; an experienced but individually disinterested group standing between Government and the recipients of arts grants. I trust that it, coupled with, in many cases, the boards of the various statutory bodies and authorities, will help to establish a proper and effective tradition of professional integrity and independence.

In addition, we have in this State, in the Arts Development Branch of my Department, a developing public service expertise in the arts generally. The Arts Grants Advisory Committee and the branch work closely in formulating and administering the primary and secondary arts grants funding in the State. At present, the Australian Government has before it a proposal to establish under Statute an 'Australia Council' charged with tasks similar to those presently performed by the Australian Council for the Arts. This will have important bearing on our future procedures in South Australia, for it may prove desirable to mirror, in an appropriate way, the new Council's structure, given that both it and the State will often continue to fund the same major organisations.

I wish now to turn from the administration of the funds, to what the funds provide.

As a matter of policy, Arts Development in South Australia is now following the general planning patterns of Government. There are four regions of urban development in the State: namely, Adelaide metropolitan area; the three northern cities that make up the area known as The Iron Triangle; the area generally known as the South East; and the new city of Monarto. In addition, there are two basic rural developmental areas, the Riverland and the Eyre Peninsula.

Following the completion of Stage Three of the Festival Centre, it is intended that planning will then proceed for the provision of compatible performing arts facilities in each of these areas. The first such centre can be expected to be in Whyalla, where it will form part of a new city-centre development that contains also library and art gallery establishments.

Other priority planning areas for the next five years are Mount Gambier, Noarlunga in the southern metropolitan area, and the city centre of the new City of Monarto. And in each of these places, while the need and general requirements are now being defined, it is nevertheless clear that the centres should not be simply places in which local dramatic societies can take refuge while waiting for a touring company to pass through. Rather, they should be community cultural centres that have a capacity to generate from their own resources creative activity of value. (I have visited such centres in France. Even though, under Pompidou, some had received drastic cuts in support, especially in areas where local councils had returned anti-Government candidates, they were clearly immensely important to their areas, maintaining as they did galleries, theatres, carpentry craftshops, pottery and painting studios and classes, audio-visual studios, print studios, libraries and so on. In fact, it was an amazing range of activity, available to and used by both young people and adults. This is the direction we must, I believe, take). A community theatre building is too limited a concept in all this. It smacks of a velvet curtain and rows of empty seats. A community 'creative' centre does not do this.

But in such developments there is another initiative we should take and for which planning has now commenced. This is in the area of the visual and plastic arts. As far as general planning is concerned, the Art Gallery of South Australia (like the Adelaide Festival Centre, the Arts Grants Advisory Committee and the Arts Development Branch) is to perform for the next few years a centralising and co-ordinating function in the development of an overall State visual arts programme. In the new year I intend to present to Parliament a Bill allowing it to expand its activities and, as it were, move outside its walls. The Director and the Board of the Art Gallery will then be able to assist in the community centres and independent regional galleries where appropriate. They will also be enabled to work with local Government organisations throughout the State in the planning, purchase, siting or general public display of works of art. The concept of the 'Gallery without Walls' will not only allow permanent works to be purchased and sited, but also for permanent and impermanent exhibition and display areas to be established for use by artists and art groups, and for artists and sculptors to be involved in the establishment and design of, for instance, adventure playgrounds, sculpture parks, graffiti walls, and so on.

As for the future home of the Art Gallery, the Government has decided in principle on its future expansion to include the Old Barracks Building area and the present east and north wings of the Museum. Both the museum and the Art Gallery are at the moment seriously short of space. In the case of the museum, its curatorial and scientific staff have working conditions that are quite inadequate, while the display areas available severely limit its capacity to properly undertake its important educative function. A new museum building will be built to properly house its valuable collections and important scientific work.

With the Art Gallery, the architecturally valuable Old Barracks Buildings will be restored and used by the Gallery and learned societies. The Gallery's present sculpture courtyard will be expanded to include the areas on both sides of the Old Barracks Building. A bridge will join the existing Art Gallery to the new. Eventually, when the new floors of the State Library Building are completed, the present old wing (that which matches the present main Museum building) will also be handed over to the Art Gallery, giving it a total complex of immense architectural charm and practicality.

In addition, the Old Legislative Council Building is to be restored when vacated by the Railways Institute, and will house both the Gallery's historical collection and its Parliamentary museum. The whole plan will create a series of museums and galleries unique in Australia.

Turning to music. By and large we are well served here, and as is generally the case, the A.B.C. is very prominent. Only today it announced its decision to change the name of the South Australian Symphony Orchestra to 'The Adelaide Symphony Orchestra'. We believe that this is an appropriate move, properly in keeping with the established practice overseas of closely identifying the Symphony orchestra with the city in which it resides, and with the fact that the Orchestra is now presenting its major concerts in the Adelaide Festival Theatre. The change of name, of course, will not in any way diminish the responsibility of the Orchestra to present concerts from time to time in the regional cities and towns of the State, especially since we have continued the policy of providing substantial financial support for the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra through the Australian Broadcasting Commission. The Orchestra, which this year has just celebrated its 25th birthday, is now recognised as one of the finest in Australia. Last year my Government renegotiated the original orchestral agreement with the A.B.C., and amongst the provisions was an increase in the Orchestra's permanent strength to 63, and for the Orchestra to be made available at no cost, subject to certain conditions, to the New Opera for two weeks of the year.

It is gratifying that the A.B.C. has demonstrated a willingness to more closely identify the Orchestra with the needs of the over-all Arts scene, which has changed so dramatically in South Australia since 1970. It is hoped that this new spirit of co-operation will extend to the Adelaide Festival of Arts, to which the A.B.C. has always made a major contribution.

There was a time when the major musical activity in this State was confined to concerts presented by the A.B.C. and Musica Viva and performances by amateur choirs, of which this State has had a long tradition. Now there is a healthy proliferation and diversification of musical activity with many organisations and societies and clubs and performing ensembles. The problem now is almost one of co-ordinating such a flow of activity and ensuring that all organisations involved are properly assisted in their organisation, administration, promotion and publicity.

The Government sees Adelaide as the future centre of music composition in Australia. In order to achieve this, we have last year created a senior three year Fellowship in Composition at the University of Adelaide. The initial recipient of this Fellowship was appropriately Richard Meale who has been resident in Adelaide now for over five years. He is, I believe, the most distinguished Australian living composer.

Early next year I intend to initiate further discussions with the University of Adelaide and other institutions involved in music education to see how the original concept of a School of Compositional Studies can best be implemented in Adelaide.

So in all this, where do we stand now? We wish to see the Adelaide Festival of Arts reach a point where it - to use Anthony Steel's term - 'stretches' the local performing arts companies to produce their finest work. With an appropriate infusion of visiting talent, the Festival should then provide us, every two years, with a time to consider properly the general standard of cultural achievement here and in Australia generally. And in this, the key companies will be the South Australian Theatre Company, New Opera and the Australian Dance Theatre. These are the three companies upon which the State's performing arts policy is now based.

(I might mention here that while these are the key companies, at the present time there are several smaller organisations and groups endeavouring to provide an alternate, more radical theatre activity. I think this is excellent. Healthy performing arts need, constantly, infusions of scandal and outrage. We are at present looking at ways and means of encouraging alternative theatre in the State without encouraging it through respectability out of existence.

Then there is the long term programme for the development of regional community arts centres. These must be not only places able to be visited by the State and other companies, but which in their own right generate worthwhile standards of performance and creative achievement. In this the Art Gallery's expanded role will be vital, together with its general expansion on North Terrace and its involvement with local government throughout the State.

Finally, we have the Arts Grants Advisory Committee, charged with the assessment of Grant recipients generally, and also with the establishment of appropriate fellowships for creative artists, writers and musicians.

It too will find its activities moving into regional areas.

That is the structure. It is evolving and in many cases long term. But it is, I believe, a proper model of Government activity in the arts in Australia today. The activity is now very broad: to ensure it remains a healthy programme effectively contributing to community development what is required is for there to be a proper understanding by the Government, by artists and by communities, of traditions of independence and artistic integrity and achievement.

Thank You.
